

STRATEGIC GOAL 3

QUALITY WORKPLACES



The Department is committed to fostering workplaces that are safe, healthy, and fair. To meet this objective, the Department is dedicated to increasing the representation, advancement, and promotion of women, people of color, veterans, and the disabled in the workplace; providing access to quality child care for working families; and improving worker safety and health. As today's workplace is increasingly affected by global markets, DOL will also address core international labor standards and child labor issues.

Miners' families wait for news outside the Monongah No. 6 and 8 Mines after a massive explosion in 1907. The coal mine disaster was to be the worst in the nation's history, claiming more than 362 lives.

OUTCOME
GOAL 3.1 –
REDUCE
WORKPLACE
INJURIES,
ILLNESSES, AND
FATALITIES

Overview

Reducing workplace injuries, illnesses, and fatalities is a core mission of the Department of Labor. In 1913, the Bureau of Labor Statistics documented approximately 23,000 industrial deaths among a workforce of 38 million, equivalent to a rate of 61 deaths per 100,000 workers. By 1998, the workforce had grown to approximately 130 million and occupational deaths had declined to 6,026 or fewer than five per 100,000 workers. This decline in occupational fatalities reflects the progress made in identifying and correcting the many factors that contribute to occupational safety and health hazards.

Serving the Public

A coal mine explosion in Monongah, West Virginia led to the passage of the Organic Act of 1910, which called for research in reducing mine accidents and established the U.S. Bureau of Mines. One year later, the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire resulted in the establishment of the Bureau of Fire Investigation, an organization with the power to impose and enforce safety regulations. A more recent mine disaster, the 1968 Farmington, West Virginia explosion, killed 78 miners and spurred passage of the 1969 Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act. One year later, the Congress established the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Since the establishment of OSHA and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), the Nation has made substantial progress in occupational safety and health. For example, since 1970, the work-related fatality rate has been cut in half, brown lung disease has been virtually eliminated in the textile industry, and trenching and excavation fatalities have been reduced by 35 percent. Mining fatalities that numbered in the 200-300 range in the 1970s now average fewer than 100 per year.

Even with this progress, significant hazards remain for America's workers. Each year, 6,000 Americans die from workplace injuries, an estimated 50,000 workers die from illnesses caused by workplace exposures, and six million people suffer non-fatal workplace injuries. Injuries alone cost U.S. businesses more than \$127 billion annually.

DOL Challenges for the Future

The challenge of making satisfactory progress toward the accomplishment of the Department's goal is affected by a number of emerging factors: the number of workers OSHA is responsible for protecting has expanded dramatically; rapid technological advances and a dynamic workplace environment have changed the nature of work, leading to new health and safety issues; and industry restructuring and global competition have put pressure on employers to reduce costs and increase productivity, which may impact safety and health conditions.

In responding to the challenges of an expanding base of workers needing protection, changing workplace conditions, and complex emerging issues, the Department must find new approaches, improve efficiency, and leverage resources to achieve the greatest possible positive impact on worker safety and health.

REDUCE MINE FATALITIES AND INJURIES

Goal 3.1A: Reduce the number of mine fatalities and the non-fatal injury rate to below the average for the previous five years.

Fatalities

Results: The 79 mine fatalities in FY 1999 is the lowest number ever recorded and is well below the baseline figure of 92.

Analysis of Results: The number of mining fatalities has continued to fall. In FY 1998, there were 80 fatalities, the lowest in the nation's history at the time. FY 1999 statistics continued this positive trend. While coal mine fatalities have decreased due to a declining workforce, improved technology, and shifting production, the metal and nonmetal mining sector has shown increasing occurrences of fatalities.

Injuries

Results: The Nonfatal-Days-Lost (NFDL) Incidence Rate of 3.47 is



Teams of volunteers trained to react in mine emergencies compete at the National Mine Rescue and First Aid Contest.

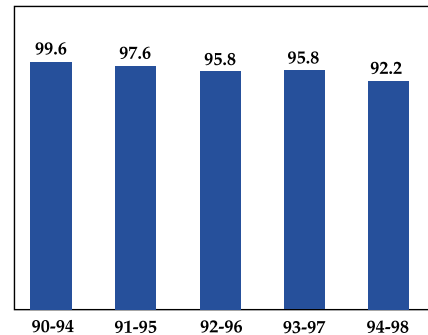
below the baseline annual rate of 4.07 and below the FY 1998 rate of 3.75.

Analysis of Results: As with fatalities, the mining injury rate has continued its downward trend. Coal mining has a higher injury rate due to the greater percentage of work hours spent in the more hazardous underground environment.

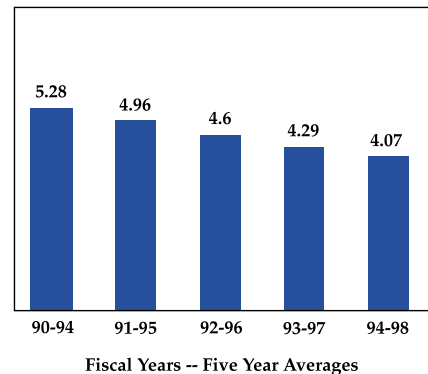
Strategies: The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) conducts mandated inspections four times per year at underground mines and two times per year at surface mines. Additional inspections are conducted as provided by the Mine Act. MSHA targets the leading causes of injuries and fatalities through "safety sweeps," training, and extensive compliance assistance efforts.

Goal Assessment and Future Plans: This performance goal remains in the Department's FY 2000 Annual Performance Plan. To reduce irregular fluctuations in annual results, a five-year moving average will remain the basis for measurement. MSHA strategies will continue targeting roof

Number of Mining Fatalities Per Year



Nonfatal - Days - Lost Incidence Rate



falls, machinery, and powered haulage issues in FY 2000. MSHA will work with mine operators on the development of training plans in

advance of the FY 2001 implementation of the new training regulation in certain categories of surface metal and nonmetal mines. ■

MINE EXPLOSION NEAR FAIRVIEW, WEST VIRGINIA

Serious Injuries Avoided

On June 22, 1999, a fire broke out at the Loveridge No. 22 coal mine near Fairview, West Virginia. Miners armed with chemical fire extinguishers and water hoses worked unsuccessfully to douse the fire. MSHA officials, who arrived shortly after the fire broke out, evacuated the entire mine area. The mine operator sealed the mine at its surface openings in an effort to cut off oxygen and extinguish the fire.

In the early hours of June 26, 77 hours after the mine was sealed, an underground explosion occurred, causing extensive damage to one of the mine shafts. The concrete and steel cap that had sealed off the mine opening just three days before catapulted into the air and landed 170 feet away.

The decision by MSHA officials to evacuate the entire mine area averted serious injuries to mine personnel and, worse, possible loss of life.